

**St Katherine's Surgery  
Ledbury**

*EXPLAINING THE  
NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE  
PRIMARY CARE  
SYSTEM  
AND  
THE  
PROBLEMS  
WE  
FACE*

## ***Explaining the Primary Care System***

The way that General Practice functions throughout the UK is often a mystery to patients. We hope this publication from our Surgery at St Katherine's in Ledbury will help to explain how everything is organised.

Pressure on the NHS is increasing as the population grows and as people live longer. This increase in demand not only requires an increase in the funding to the NHS but also requires significant change so that one of the largest organisations and employers in the world can function as efficiently and as cost effectively as it should.

General Practice is the cornerstone of the NHS and is ideally placed to deliver care close to peoples' homes and to focus on preventing illnesses - as well as treating them. But the funding for Primary Care is nowhere near a match for the rate of increase in demand. Meeting this demand will soon become unsustainable and, most importantly, this risks becoming unsafe for patients and for doctors.

## ***General Practice as a Business***

Each General Practice Surgery functions as an independent business. We are funded for what are termed Core Services and for Enhanced Services by NHS England and by our local Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. The Herefordshire CCG is responsible for implementing the commissioning roles as set out in the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

### **Core Services**

The General Medical Services contract includes providing appointments for those with urgent and routine problems, long-term conditions or terminal conditions, contraceptive services, prescriptions, cervical screening, maternity services, and vaccinations. This contract provides **£130** per patient, annually.

### **Enhanced Services**

These are optional additional services which include annual influenza vaccinations, NHS vascular health checks, shingles vaccinations, care planning for those at risk of admission, or living in, a care home, pneumococcal vaccinations, learning disability health checks, and the MMR vaccination catch-up programme.

**The payments for both Core and Enhanced Services cover the cost of staff and equipment required to deliver the services in a safe and timely manner. These payments also have to cover all other costs of running a business.**

## **Numbers and Facts**

**90%** of all contacts by patients are requests to be seen by their GP: compared with last year there have been **130** additional GP consultations per month: there has been an **18% rise** in the NHS budget as a whole – but, in funding General Practice, a **£9bn drop** since 2005/6 – this is an **8% drop** in real terms.

The average payment to General Practice per patient, per year, is **£130**. So, to put this figure in perspective, consider that it can cost more than **£250** to insure your family pet for a year, and a subscription to Sky television costs more than **£200**.

*This £130 has to cover unlimited visits to the GP or nurse, unlimited referrals to Secondary Care, the cost of employing doctors, nurses, healthcare assistants and administrative staff; it includes maintaining premises and ensuring we have modern, functioning, equipment to adequately assess for treatment and diagnosis.*

All our staff work hard to provide the best service that we can for you. We are under no illusions that with increased resources, more money, and our time freed up, we would be able to improve and develop services. We become just as frustrated as you when we are unable to achieve this because of the constraints of funding and resources.

*It is increasingly difficult for us to sustain the range of services which we have offered historically - let alone the ability to develop new services tailored to the needs of the population of Ledbury and the surrounding area.*

We are now in the position of having to stop non-essential services (like ear syringing which previously were free) for which we are not funded. No business would survive if it were to function in this way.

*The Royal College of General Practitioners states that, in the last two years, nearly half of GPs have had to cut back on the range of services they provide for their patients so we are not alone. This means that you may have to wait a little longer than you would like for a routine appointment or, when you contact us with a routine query, that the GP may not be able to telephone you on the same day. We must constantly ensure that terminally ill patients, or those with long-term life-limiting conditions, are able to access services when they need them.*

We would love to employ more doctors and to increase the number of appointments we offer but we do not have the resources to do this. Already we are in the position of not replacing administrative staff if someone leaves.

**To tackle this decline in funding for General Practice we all need to work together – patients, doctors, nurses and administrative staff.**

**It is important to remember that we all want the same thing:  
a safe, reliable, accessible, effective service that is  
adequately resourced to meet your health needs.**

If you would like to get involved in the *Put Patients First: Back General Practice*, please visit [www.rcgp.org.uk/campaign-home](http://www.rcgp.org.uk/campaign-home) to sign up as a supporter.

You can also join the St Katherine's Surgery Patient Participation Group.

If you would like to voice your concerns about the future of General Practice and the NHS then please write to your MP, Bill Wiggin. The NHS is something that we should all be proud of, and we certainly are proud to be a part of it, but there now needs to be an effort to ensure that funding is fairly and evenly distributed between the various sectors working as part of the NHS.

## **THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP**

### **Is the GP the most appropriate person for you to see?**

Our receptionists are here to help – a quick discussion with them may save both you and the GP's time by suggesting you see a more appropriate person.

For example:

- *Did you know you can self-refer to physiotherapy?*
- *Did you know that we offer minor illness appointments with the Practice Nurse for problems such as cough, earache, sore throat, skin infection, rash, constipation, hay fever, bite (by cat, dog, or insect), post-operative wound problems, urinary tract infection (sample to be tested first), exacerbations of COPD or asthma.*
- *Did you know that a pharmacist can help you with queries about your medication and minor ailments?*
- *Have you looked on line at **NHS Choices** for information about your symptoms? There is a wealth of information about a variety of common conditions and minor ailments which may enable you to self-care or will advise you if you need to seek further advice from a healthcare professional.*

### **Do you have more than one problem to discuss with the GP?**

Please book a *double appointment* so that the GP will have enough time to assess both problems – although you may need to wait a little longer for this appointment. You will help the GP to keep to their surgery time and reduce waiting time for other patients.